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## **VPM SILVAN SHALOM: ISRAEL CAUGHT OFF GUARD**

*Flawed intel led to deadly ambush*

*Minister links Gaza blockade to Gilad Shalit*

June 8, 2010 (New York City) -- In an exclusive interview with Mark S. Golub, president of Shalom TV, Israel's Senior Vice Prime Minister Silvan Shalom acknowledges that Israel was caught off guard with flawed intel in last week's military operation at sea, wherein Israeli troops first boarded a ship lightly armed, only to be ambushed by knife- and pipe-wielding mercenaries, nine of whom were killed when Israeli backup forces entered the operation which had become--of necessity--a rescue.



Mr. Shalom, Israel's second highest ranking public official, relays that flawed information played a part in causing the IDF to be confident that the worst thing that they might expect from the so-called peace activists aboard would be passengers chaining themselves to the ship.

Shalom tells Golub, "We had maybe [a] lack of information and we have to admit that some of the information that we got was that all of them would be...non-violent."

Israel's military was also, he explains, lulled into a false sense of relative security by the simple and lawful way in which the initial five ships were evacuated of their occupants and cargo.

Giving the Israeli Senior Vice Prime Minister the opportunity to answer the concerns expressed by American Jews who support Israel, Golub asks whether chocolate and other non-military items withheld from cross-border humanitarian shipments to Gaza constitute unnecessary "collective punishment" of Palestinian residents. Shalom responds: "If they don't have chocolate, they should know that for years Gilad Shalit did not see the light of the sun," referring to the 23-year old Israeli soldier held in Gaza since being kidnapped by Hamas in June of 2006. "Relations are always based on reciprocity and if it [the Palestinian relationship to Israel] would have been based on mutual understanding, believe me there would be no problem to bring everything they want."

Commenting on statements by General Petraeus and Anthony Cordisman that suggest that Israel is becoming a strategic liability to the United States, Vice Prime Minister Shalom argues the exact opposite. "The only strategic asset the United States has in the Middle East is Israel. The Middle East is very important--geographically, militarily, politically, economically--and the interests of the United States are kept in the Middle East only because Israel is there and is helping the United States to keep it."

Speaking about the way in which Israeli concessions are viewed by the Arab world as a sign of weakness, the Senior Vice Prime Minister insists that Israel would maintain Jewish standards of morality and at the same time do everything possible to protect Israeli safety.

"While we are asked all the time to implement Western standards [of behavior], and to approach problems with a Western morality, the other side, unfortunately, views this as Israeli weakness and they try to do even more to force Israel to make moves Israel does not want to make," Silvan explains. "We are going to keep those standards, because we are human beings and Jews--and we're not going to treat our enemies the same way they treat us. But at the same time, when it comes to self-defense, we will do everything we can to protect the safety and interests of the people of the State of Israel."

Mr. Shalom concludes by noting he would like all of American Jewry to support Israel as it was "for decades since the establishment of the state."

Shalom TV can be seen on Comcast, Time Warner, Cablevision, Veirzon FiOS, Cox, RCN, Bright House, Armstrong, Service Electric Cablevision, Buckeye CableSystem, Metrocast, Blue Ridge Communications, and Rogers Cable (Canada).